



The Secretary of Energy
Washington, D.C. 20585

November 9, 2007

Dr. Ralph J. Cicerone, Ph.D.
President, National Academy of Sciences
500 Fifth Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Dr. ~~Cicerone~~ *Ralph*:

This letter is to express my great disappointment in the newly released report on the Department of Energy's (DOE) Nuclear Energy Research and Development Program, with regard to its conclusions regarding the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP), and in my view, an inadequate consideration of significant program planning information that was available but not considered by the review committee.

The Department appreciates the challenge faced by the review committee and realizes that a review for such an effort does need to be temporarily cut off at some point to give adequate time for final editing, review, and approval of the report. However, given the fact that new funding for the GNEP program was delayed until March 2007 as a result of the year-long continuing resolution, it is most unfortunate that the committee chose to close the review period in July 2007, only four months into the program.

One of the most serious concerns we have about this report is use of the term "GNEP" when the committee truly seeks to comment on the research and development conducted through the Department's Advanced Fuel Cycle Initiative (AFCI) in support of GNEP. By making the blanket statement that "GNEP should not go forward," the committee brings into question the U.S.-led international partnership that currently consists of 16 nations. I recently led a ministerial meeting of representatives from these 16 countries, in addition to 19 other observer countries and three international organizations. At this meeting, it was evident that a growing international consensus exists that supports urgently moving forward to develop the political and technical framework for closing the nuclear fuel cycle. I accept that the committee did not mean to comment on the international partnership as evidenced by the press release issued with the report, but the poorly chosen language in the report and the committee's inflexibility to modify this language during the pre-publication review reflect negatively on the National Academies.

The de facto conclusion of the report relating to GNEP is that the program "should not go forward and that it should be replaced by a less aggressive research program." This conclusion is premised on the faulty assumption that



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DOE has narrowed the potential technology to be deployed solely to UREX+ (the baseline technology developed at DOE's National Laboratories) and that it is moving too aggressively towards commercial deployment. However, as noted to the committee both via interview and in multiple documents, we have made no technology selection and in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act are currently evaluating alternative technologies and approaches to closing the nuclear fuel cycle.

The committee's support for closing the fuel cycle is noteworthy. However, we take issue with the level of urgency the committee feels should be placed on this vital task. The projected global demand for electricity is expected to nearly double by 2030. Many nations, including the United States, are witnessing a rebirth of nuclear power to address this coming demand in a way that does not contribute to the concern about climate change. It is paramount that leaders in this country seek to solve the issues that inhibit the expansion of nuclear power, including providing a durable and credible nuclear waste disposition path.

In the coming weeks and months, there will undoubtedly be opportunities for open debate on how the Federal Government should execute its management responsibilities for the Nation's growing inventory of spent nuclear fuel. I hope that the National Academies will participate in these discussions and use its prestige and its reputation for scientific excellence to help guide the scientific and engineering communities in their quest to provide sound solutions to an ever growing challenge.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sam', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Samuel W. Bodman